

# FREEDOM

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BY DONATION

**FROM CO-OPS TO DIRECT ACTION,  
WHEN PARTIES OFFER NOTHING WE  
MUST LEARN TO HELP OURSELVES**



**PATHS OF RESISTANCE**

# EDITORIAL

It's all getting away from them really, isn't it. The economy. It's why the National Conversation is so focused on culture warring, migration, that sort of thing. Neither party has the faintest clue what to do about this period of, as Matthew Azoulay puts it (p16), "metacrisis", other than to try and do what they've always done and exploit it on behalf of the rich.

The media focuses on keeping its blame games away from the upper crust. The pretence that wages keeping up with inflation is the same thing as wages *driving* inflation. That GDP growth is the same thing as social prosperity. That what's good for the rich is what's good for the rest of us.

But we can all see, with our own two eyes, that this is bunk. The reason inflation has gotten out of hand is the same reason firms have been posting obscene profits from post-Covid price gouging – our incomes are chasing, not leading.

GDP meanwhile has always been a bizarre measurement of how well we're doing as a society. The more windows get broken and fixed then better it looks on their balance sheet. If MPs really want to boost GDP they could try a wholesale burning of Chelsea tractors.

The reality though, as these people clutch their pearls over gross product, and whether enough has been done to butter up bosses, is that our lives would be in decline even if inflation were stable, GDP on the rise and CEOs giddy with delight.

The young are afraid, because they can't afford to live in this toxic mix of parasitic landlordism and crushing of incomes. Our elders are afraid, because an economy full of impoverished people is a desperate one, so bullying and crime tends to go up.

High streets, the central axis around which people's lives have historically revolved, have for a long time been

struggling everywhere except in the biggest of cities. A combination of Covid, inflation and wartime energy shortages has done immense additional damage.

This has been felt deeply, even if it's not often talked about. Isolation is increased, which has cut into our ability to support those who need it. Yet at the same time the state has quite deliberately retreated. It no longer offers many of the services we used to take for granted.

And that really does leave our futures in our own hands. What options are there left other than to (re)build the structures of community and organised resistance that make life worthwhile, being damn sure as we do so that they can't be co-opted and ruined by profiteers and politicians?

We've always been exploited by the Lords and Ladies. Now even the least of the deal they offered has been broken we must turn our backs on them.

## UPDATE FROM ANGEL ALLEY

All has been ticking over reasonably well for the Freedom Collective for the most part, with some well-recieved talks at the bookshop (keep an eye on our social media for future announcements), some cracking stories going on our news wire and a flurry of title refreshes going on by the publishing crew, who have been scanning and reprinting some of our back catalogue.

In the Alley as a whole, too, there has been some good progress at the space with new multicolour lighting being installed near the entrance, which has made getting back and forth much safer. Round the back, meanwhile, there is a new drinking water tap and Know Your Rights sign for local homeless people.

### A new rebuild

The building itself is where it looks like we're going to have to concentrate next in our endless task of sorting things out.

Since our last fundraiser in 2016, we've managed to mostly keep on top of things, with the building collective of member groups (Freedom, Haven, AF, NBTA, Dog Section and ASS) sharing the rates, utilities etc between them. Maintenance

has been covered through intermittent one-offs, plus some hands-on help from our wonderful supporters and volunteers.

This year however has affected us as much as anyone. Rates and electricity prices particularly are proving difficult just as we need to be thinking about some more serious repair work.

So it looks like we're going to need to do a fundraiser for the first time in a fair few years. Some of the items we'll be looking at include:

- Fixing the windows and frames
- Sorting out the fascia, gutters, and water damage on the back wall
- Stair and floorboard repairs
- Shutter fixes
- A proper winter heating system

Alongside more decorative stuff like installing nicer floors, tidying various surrounds that have decayed or not been finished previously, etc.

The windows and walls in particular are likely to be an expensive fix, and our aim will be to raise £15,000 over the next while.

The good news is that we have already secured a bit of matching funding, and thanks to a small legacy from Brian Biggins, a well-regarded Glasgow anarchist who sadly died last year, we will have a bit of money available to put into it ourselves.

The building at 84B Whitechapel High Street is, as anyone who's visited knows, held up as much by its dreams as its bricks. But we do need the latter, so please do donate!

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# SOLIDARITY EXPERIENCES

Simplicity is certainty.

Simple recipes give you confidence that you won't burn your dinner. Simple directions help us navigate an uncertain world. Simple goals allow people to find common ground. As the left tears itself apart like a bear with fleas, we find cohesion in a simple word. Solidarity.

It is a fundamental anarchist principle that without oppression, humans are cooperative, but capitalism and liberal ideology rob us of our innate compassion.

Geographical separation amplifies this. Existence under capitalism, forced to move around to find affordable rents or jobs that provide enough income, further destroys natural community solidarity.

Solidarity groups have begun to emerge, in response, refocusing energy on the real enemy.

Such efforts are not new. People have formed informal solidarity groups since the beginning of society. We exist in a long anarchist tradition of self-organising communities. The difference with this movement is where other groups on the left organise around a particular issue or goal; we organise around solidarity



with our local communities. This place-centred approach allows an in-depth understanding of the problems we face and the local resources at our disposal.

## Haringey: The old hands

London's longest running community group is Haringey Solidarity Group (HSG), which has been active for 30 years, starting life as an anti-Poll Tax group.

HSG is active in residents' associations, anti-fascism, Haringey Against ID, anti-billboard posters, anti-debt, and many other struggles. They've supported workers' struggles in the borough and beyond, including the 1995 JJ Foods Strike and the 2009 Ford Visteon factory occupations. They organise free community festivals, the monthly Haringey Independent Cinema, and other social events. HSG regularly distributes thousands of copies of its free newsletter, *Totally Independent*.

What enabled HSG to survive so long is their model of flexibility over time, absorbing and covering a wide range of issues and keeping a regular meeting every month, ready for a new struggle that could be, and often is, just around the corner. Avoiding the horror story of an affinity group that stayed together too long after its main purpose was served, not being tied to one issue allows people to move fluidly as the area's priorities change and the group's capacity fluctuates.

## Tower Hamlets: One year in

Tower Hamlets Solidarity Group (TH Solidarity) took local strike actions and protests as our rallying point. We lent our voices, presence, and unwavering support to those demanding justice. As our journey unfolded, we identified another critical issue in our community: access to good-quality, affordable food. Inspired by the Cooperation Town model, we formed a food co-op.

This enabled us to address our needs and build connections with other local

people and other borough food groups. This network also allowed us to actively support projects such as the Autonomous Winter Shelter. Through these alliances, we discovered the true power of solidarity — how interconnected struggles can magnify our impact.

When crisis struck in the form of the Maddox House fire in early March, TH Solidarity was ready. We swiftly mobilised, linking survivors with accommodation at the Autonomous Winter Shelter and working with the London Renters Union to offer aid in their legal struggle, negotiating with the council and recovering their possessions from a scumbag landlord who appeared intent on using them for leverage.

TH Solidarity taught us that solidarity is not confined to one issue or method. Our wide remit has allowed us to adapt and respond to various pressing issues. From labour rights, food security, housing crises, and community events, we've discovered that our collective strength knows no bounds.

## A call to action

This summer, we started workshops; our first event brought together 30 people from across London to hear about our ethos before separating into rough geographical areas, where participants discussed what issues they faced.

We share a vision with HSG for a network of solidarity groups worldwide to communicate larger struggles. You're probably wondering where you can find your fellow solidaritees. Think local. Community has been eroded through years of neoliberalism but can never be destroyed. Find and connect. Our group found solidaritees in a local network of community gardens. We found solidaritees in people on our estates. We found solidaritees where people meet to pick up their children. To get their groceries. To read. To eat. Solidaritees are found in any place where public space remains.

Solidarity is simple. Solidarity is unifying. Solidarity makes life bear-able...

~ Arrow



*A squatted social space for the homeless, violently evicted by hundreds of cops in June 2023*



# ROLE OF THE DSEI

The 24th anniversary of the Defence and Security Equipment International (DSEI), one of the world's largest arms fairs, took place in September 2023.

DSEI takes place every two years – so that's 14 DSEIs where we've essentially failed to shut down the fair. This DSEI was also the smallest mobilisation we've possibly ever seen – making it a good time to reflect on what we've achieved and what our resistance could look like moving forward.

Protests against DSEI have taken many forms. For probably the first half of its existence, our resistance was focused on the days of the fair itself – and preventing delegates from reaching the arms fair. In the days when actions at global summits were at their peak, there was a real push from anarchist anti-militarists to move DSEI away from being a purely peace movement issue and put DSEI on the map as an event in the anti-capitalist calendar. In the last ten years, resistance has focussed on the set-up of the arms fair and stopping equipment from getting to the fair in the first place.

Both tactics have seen results over the years. However, like anything, if we repeat the same tactic too many times, the state quickly learns how to tackle it. This year, while the protests were small, so was the traffic going onto the site. After all, it would be a very stupid event planner who didn't factor in the fact that pesky campaigners like stopping traffic and climbing onto tanks.

DSEI 2023 also took place in a new climate of intolerance for protest, which undoubtedly affected our numbers and actions. The combination of new legislation, people with ongoing court cases, and the continuing inability of people to present defences in court meant fewer people were willing to risk arrest. But we also need to accept the new legislation's chilling impact.

But while small, the fortnight of resistance was good. There were excellent

workshops encompassing the many intersections of struggles the arms trade brings together. And the Tuesday migrant justice protest got up close and personal with the arms dealers themselves. The stunned look of – mostly men – in suits as we shouted "shame" right in their faces was cathartic but also impactful. These people deal in death and destruction; their profit margins rely on perpetuating global misery. Generally, this work is carried out from plush offices, where they can hide from facing the reality of their work. At DSEI, they can't do this.

Unfortunately, while our protests were small, business was booming at the ExCeL centre. DSEI 2023 was the biggest ever iteration of this death jamboree. One DSEI exec even admitted that war was good for business – and the arms trade is using the war in Ukraine to reinvent itself as a bastion of global security in a new, dangerous world. And while shouting at arms dealers is good, it's clear that the arms trade won the battle this time.

All this means that moving forward, there are a lot of questions about what our resistance should look like both to DSEI and the arms trade in general. Palestine Action has shown the effectiveness of a targeted campaign – and the various 'underground' actions taking place are both an inevitable response to state crackdowns on our right to protest and a good reminder that we don't need to seek arrest to take part in effective action.

And where we've been successful against DSEI is when we've run these kinds of sustained campaigns. Original owners Spearhead and Reed were forced to sell the business after targeted campaigns, using a diversity of tactics, at their offices and events. But Clarion, which now runs DSEI, has had an easy time and happily runs incongruous events such as the Baby Show with barely a whisper of opposition.

The question for campaigners is whether we have the energy or desire to run such a campaign. After all, there are other arms fairs and many arms companies that we could also target – so where is the best place for our energy? Where are we likely to have the most impact? Where are the chinks we can smash through and have some wins? What does the new legislative climate mean for the future of anti-arms trade campaigning? How do we make the arms trade relevant for a new generation of campaigners? These strategic conversations need to take place to ensure our resistance is as strong as it can be against this abhorrent trade.

But if we're serious about shutting down DSEI, one thing is clear – the protests against the fair itself need to be the icing on the cake. This mobilisation is the culmination of strategic, sustained campaigning and movement building. Because as much as shouting at arms dealers is good, we should be aiming to stop them from doing their deals in the first place.

~ Emily Apple



Pic: Guy Smallman

# RED FLARE ROUND-UP

A new group appeared on the British far right in 2019, the fascist party Patriotic Alternative (PA). It represented something new in the recent history of the far right. Unlike National Action, which had been prominent earlier that decade and whose delight in shock, edginess, and explicit neo-Nazism precluded a mass membership, PA instead set about building a new cadre of activists.

It predominantly targeted young men who were introduced to neo-Nazism by the YouTube algorithm, through privately organised social events for members, such as hikes and litter picks.

This differed significantly from previous far-right tendencies like the English Defence League and presented a problem for anti-fascists. A lack of pre-announced public demonstrations meant counter-protests couldn't be organised and severely limited opportunities for intelligence gathering. Because of this, key figures within PA remained in the shadows, and anti-fascists were left scrambling to understand and respond to the new threat.

At first glance, not much has changed since 2019. The party is still led by Mark Collett, who formerly held a leadership position in the BNP. There is also a familiar pattern to PA's calendar of summer camps, conferences and days of action. Due to anti-fascist opposition, however, the party has been forced to significantly ramp up security measures – which has presented a new challenge to researchers who have had to find new ways to monitor the group. It has also undergone a series of splits, the most significant being the new fascist party Homeland, primarily composed of disaffected former regional and national PA organisers.

The present mode of organisation on the British far-right has made it difficult to accurately estimate the number of those involved, although hundreds of fascists are active across PA, Homeland, and associated groups. Splits, state repression, and increasing paranoia have fractured British fascism. Reviewing photos of PA's annual summer camp has shown a notable decrease in attendees since the Homeland split. Social events and demonstrations have been consolidated across wider regions, to boost the number of attendees.



Stories published by Red Flare have caused some prominent figures to take a step back from organising or have otherwise faced negative consequences for their activity. In August, we found out that Homeland organiser Anthony Burrows, previously exposed by RF, had three shotguns confiscated and his gun licence revoked after Special Branch sent RF's social media posts unmasking Burrows to local authorities.

Security procedures have also been a new source of tension within PA. Measures like ID checks and home visits have put off newer recruits. Supporters in sensitive jobs, such as teachers, police officers, civil servants, or those who run public-facing businesses, were reluctant to have copies

of their IDs held by the party – fearing that their comfort could be put at risk if their membership of a fascist political party was ever revealed.

Disputes over security were one of the key factors in the Homeland split. The faction led by PA's then-national administration officer Kenny Smith disagreed with Collett's proposal to relax security measures for trusted supporters.

Further pressure has come from the state as the far-right has come under scrutiny from counter-terrorism police and the security services. Prominent figures associated with PA have been handed lengthy prison sentences over the past year. This includes PA's national fitness officer Kristofer Kearney, who was sentenced to four years and eight months for sharing terrorist manifestos, PA's conference organiser James Allchurch, who was given two-and-a-half years for distributing material to stir up racial hatred, and most recently, Ashley Podsiad-Sharp was sentenced to eight years for the possession of terrorist material. Sharp had founded an explicitly neo-Nazi podcast which hosted PA leaders before forming a fascist fitness club.

While this version of the far right is still in a nascent form, that doesn't mean anti-fascists shouldn't be organising. Internal cadre building only goes so far. PA will need to expand its activities to grow further and appease a membership desperate for activity. This has already begun, particularly with campaigns against migrants being housed in hotels and transphobic campaigns against drag queen reading events.

One of the chief purposes of PA and Homeland is to create a new generation of committed fascist activists who will likely continue to organise past the lifespan of either party. Disrupting the far right now will serve anti-fascists well in the future. The information we can gather will prove invaluable in the struggles to come.

If you would like to support Red Flare in its work, you can donate to their fundraiser at [redflare.info/donate](https://redflare.info/donate). If you would like to get involved in researching the far right, you can get started with a Telegram account. Tips can be sent to [mail@redflare.info](mailto:mail@redflare.info).

~ Allan Jones  
[redflare.info](https://redflare.info)





# HULL'S NEW GROOVE: FROM OR HOW TO BUILD UP A CO-OPERATIVE VISION

The people of Hull are frank, funny, and disillusioned, and the city rests not only in a basin but also at the sharp edge of crisis. We are the country's second most vulnerable city to flooding after London, our neighbourhoods experience the worst effects of fuel poverty, and we consistently rank the lowest for voter turnout in national statistics. People here know what's wrong, more so than most. So, in spring of 2023, I moved here with three others to kickstart an experiment of what's possible called Cooperation Hull.

Inspired by Cooperation Jackson, Rojava, and many others and drawing on our learnings from Extinction Rebellion, we're on a mission to create new democratic structures, and to replace today's antiquated politics with new economic structures that prioritise equality and planetary health above profit. And we've swapped arrests for assemblies to get there.

We believe that ordinary people reclaiming decision making power is the key to unlocking widespread action and the spark that will ignite lasting change. We envisage a network of autonomous people's assemblies spanning the British Isles, open to all but guided by fundamental ideas like equality, solidarity and duty to people seven generations from now<sup>1</sup>, making local decisions for themselves and regional or national decisions collectively via accountable and recallable delegates.

The first catalysers for this project met during Extinction Rebellion's (XR) heyday, and between us, we've been arrested more than 50 times since 2018. We value protest, but we now recognise it needs to be one tool among many, one element of a comprehensive movement for change.

It seems increasingly fantastical to hope that either of the power-hungry, short-termist political parties will grant citizens assemblies in a meaningful way, in a meaningful timeframe (XR's most radical demand). And, as time has passed and fires have raged, crops have failed, and dinghies have sunk just beyond our shores, we have also questioned the scale

of the impact these kinds of concessions would have. The government invites 200 "demographically representative" people into a room ... What about everyone else?

XR showed thousands of cynical nobodies like me the power of ordinary people doing extraordinary things, and I am grateful to Just Stop Oil for continuing to be uncompromising in their tactics. But after years of testing the arrest-based theory of change and, ultimately, the failure to achieve our demands, as well as the unignorable absence of 3.5% of the population standing side-by-side with us<sup>2</sup>, we saw the need for a more long-term strategy, a systems thinking approach that reflects the complexity of the problems, and a plan for engaging everyone else.

## Engaging Everyone Else

We have had to confront how far some of the left's talking points have missed the mark with people around here. People who have seen their pay packets shrink, the price of bread soar, their community centres, libraries and pubs close for good. People who voted for Brexit and who have lived on the same road for 50 years and in the last 15 years have seen the languages, shops, and culture change radically around them without them.

We have resisted labels like 'eco socialism', 'communism' or 'socialism' that, without achingly careful communication and unlearning, would alienate many of the people we're trying to reach. Most people, especially during the interminable cost of living crisis, can see the sense in prioritising fairness over endless profit without mentioning communism or capitalism. And although I've met people with all kinds of political viewpoints, I haven't yet met a single person who answered the question "Do you trust politicians?" with anything other than a sardonic and resounding "no".

Of course, in an assembly's solution and implementation phase, things will become more detailed; informed debate may, in time, require a more ideological basis. But



Pic: Patrick, Cooperation Hull

for now, we side with beat poet Diane di Prima: "Marx has to go and Lenin with him / let's stop looking over our shoulders". Besides, in this age of conspiracy and the rise of the far right, it would be suicide to shut off our ideas to people who would recoil at being called a socialist or close our doors to people beginning to see sense in the "stop the boats" rhetoric. This is not about having one right answer and beating everyone else over the head with it. It's about reaching as many people as possible and relearning the forgotten skill of conversation, the lost act of participation, and the civic art of hearing and being heard. Remembering democracy will take practice; we're way behind on our hours.

## The Practice

Although the practice of democracy has been lost, the instinct remains. A 23% voter turnout (13% in some places) could imply a lack of interest, but conversations on the street reveal something more nuanced. George, an army veteran, doesn't bother



# ARRESTS TO ASSEMBLIES



voting but has plenty of stories about local corruption, ideas for what he would do if he were Prime Minister, and makes a convincing case for just getting people to sit down outside Downing Street “until they negotiate”. Helen had voted her whole life but now thinks it’s hopeless since she felt “sold down the river” when her pension age was increased with little warning or support. For many people, it feels like politics is something that’s done to us, and it seems futile to even attempt to participate.

In our short time here, we’ve had climate deniers interrupt a teach-in on climate science, a confrontation between a young trans person and someone who was convinced children were being manipulated into transitioning, a passionate Trump fan talking about racism with a black person, and countless people on the street tell us the cause of [insert issue here] is “too many people coming here”. These are not easy moments to navigate, and we have by no means perfected the art. But in these instances, the conversation was allowed to continue, and all parties remained to see it through. This is the beginning of the practice.

We are laying the groundwork for the wisdom of the people to be realised in the assemblies – where all participants are accountable to a set of ground rules agreed at the start, which means all opinions are welcome but all behaviours and language are not (we agree to respect each other, the facilitator and the process, to focus on the “issue not the person”, to make our contributions constructive and helpful even in disagreement, among other things). We are laying the groundwork for what’s possible: collective decision making in our communities on the biggest challenges of our time.

## What’s Possible

Since April, the core organising team of Cooperation Hull has multiplied encouragingly. We’ve facilitated five neighbourhood assemblies (people’s assemblies at the postcode level) and had hundreds of conversations on the doorstep and in the street. We’re aiming for two neighbourhood assemblies per postcode from HU1 to HU9, building towards the initiation of the Hull People’s Assembly<sup>3</sup> next spring, a citywide deliberation

process that can respond to and build on what came from the neighbourhood assemblies, ratify an ongoing strategy for Hull, support initiatives in line with this strategy, deliberate on big topics like flooding or food prices, and that, crucially, can stay the course. In the words of Cooperation Jackson founder Kali Akuno, the Hull People’s Assembly needs to become “an institution”, “an ongoing process and an enduring base of power”.

In time, the Hull People’s Assembly needs to become self-organising. To get there our work is sense-checked against a five-pillar strategy: Democracy, Economy, Education, Ecology and Action. People’s assemblies are the primary element, but it won’t work in a vacuum; we also need to solidify a local solidarity economy which can encompass the entire supply chain, develop an education program of peer-to-peer teach-ins which can disseminate essential skills for living through the coming decades, reimagine humanity’s place in the wider ecology and prepare our communities to take civilly disobedient action if needed, to protect our ideas from intervention.

In Hull, grassroots initiatives abound. We Are Not Takeaway rescues and delivers waste food. The Timebank and Library of Stuff are helping people be less reliant on money (and stuff). All this and more is already flourishing: a burgeoning solidarity economy. We see our role as connecting these groups with the will of the people, forming a coherent strategy and alternative power base; the skills and resources within the organisations can help to implement the decisions of the assembly, and the assembly can increase the reach and capacity of the organisations.

A common refrain on the doorstep is: “Great, it’ll never work.” We know the disillusioned people of Hull will take some convincing, and that’s no bad thing. But it’s up to all of us to prove to each other that it can. That we, the people, are capable of change and worth the effort. It’s up to all of us to take a good hard look at what’s possible (and yes, it is sure to be hard), to pick up useful ideas and try them, to be wrong and keep going, and to push any windows of possibility open so wide they may never slam shut again.

~Gully, Co-operation Hull  
Insta: @cooperationhull

1. A principle borrowed from Iroquois philosophy

2. A reference to XR’s contention that if 3.5% of the public actively stand together to create change then success will follow

3. Not to be confused with the anti-cuts group that sometimes organises marches in London



# A MAYDAY IN PARIS

*How the City of Lights reveals the strength and potential of anarchist organisation against police repression.*

It is often said that the French have perfected the art of protest, and if you're comparing from a British perspective, they most certainly have. Before coming to Paris on May 1st, I'd never seen a building being burnt down, never seen the police retreat from protecting banks under a hail of stones, and never seen the spectacle of a firefight between the Black Bloc wielding a barrage of fireworks, and the intermittent charges of the pigs.

But beyond the spectacle we often see on the news or telegram channels, there is a deeper analysis to be had of the riots in Paris on May 1st. In this article, I'd like to focus on the dynamic relationship between the two actors in these protests, the rioters and the police, and how it reveals the tactical strengths of anarchist organisation against the extremes of the police state.

## Repression

May 1st may display the finest of anarchist organisation but it also shows the extremes of the forces of reaction. As the Black Bloc advances at the front of the protest, they are under constant attack and surveillance by the forces of repression. Drones fly overhead, monitoring and documenting the protest; police block the roads around the official route, sometimes in ranks seven deep; riot cops attempt to split the protest by kettling radical elements, beating those who advance with banners in refusal of their orders, and dousing the procession in tear gas. Once the end of the protest route, Place de la Nation is reached, each exit is guarded by a thick wall of riot cops, vans, and water cannons.

Throughout, we see the willingness of police to inflict indiscriminate cruelty on protesters to control them and make arrests. Early on, to split the Black Bloc in two, they tear-gas the road, forcing everyone, old and young alike, to be crushed in a human stampede against the buildings. It's extremely uncomfortable for me, but for the elderly, it's a potentially dangerous situation and its continued

unfolding is only prevented by the shouts of other protesters to walk rather than run from the tear gas.

Similarly, at Place de la Nation, riot police periodically charge out from their positions to arrest protesters, bowling over and trampling any bystanders. This is neither accidental nor simply unnecessary violence (though there is plenty of that unfolding all around) but rather a necessary tactic to split the more "hardcore" and "peaceful" protesters. Tear gas use is particularly heavy as this thins out the crowds while the Black Bloc (generally more prepared) remains, allowing arrests. This is seen most of all at Place de la Nation, where the entire area is flooded with teargas, reducing many to wheezing on the ground or retreating from the area where the most pitched battles are taking place.

From air and ground, the protests are monitored, harassed, and arrested by a force trained, equipped, and experienced in this specific situation. Yet still, the Black Bloc continues, creating massive damage to targets along the way.

From this adaptability of anarchists in France, we can find inspiration for our struggles in the UK.

## Resistance

In discussing anarchists' tactics in France, I'd first like to make two notes: I'm focusing on May 1st in Paris 2023, from my experience. Other resistance, such as strike action, the *Soulevements de Terre*, and riots in the aftermath of Nahel Merzouk's murder by the police in June, deserve analysis from an anarchist perspective, but they're not the focus. Secondly, I consider the Black Bloc a largely anarchist force. I realise this is not strictly true; most anarchists may support the Black Bloc, but you don't need to be an anarchist to "join". Yet, as we shall see, in tactics and seemingly makeup, the Black Bloc in France seems a profoundly anarchistic force, which certainly has relevance to anarchists overseas.

Under the previously discussed onslaught of state forces, the resistance that emerges displays the finest of decentralised organisation. The rough



principles of this are simple. At each protest (including the far smaller ones in my hometown of Reims), the Black Bloc gathers at the front behind large banners. This is done without orders but rather as common knowledge: if you want to participate, the front of the protest is where to be. Armed with smuggled-in fireworks, small explosives, and hammers to break off stones, the Black Bloc is flanked by other protesters, often from the more militant unions such as the anarcho-sindicalist CNT.

Yet, from what initially seems a simple grouping of like-minded individuals, the decentralised organisation that emerges adapts to the extremes of repression at every turn. Against police violence,





volunteer paramedics travel in groups, each with a hand on the shoulder of the person in front. When people fall, injured, they are quickly called by shouts of "Medic!" and form a human shield around their fallen comrade to prevent trampling. Other small groups emerge, such as those targeting particular buildings, dividing the work between smashing windows, throwing in incendiaries and explosives, and preventing onlookers from taking photos. Beyond certain small groups focused on specific tasks, resources from saline water to stones are handed around freely.

Most important, perhaps, is the role of the bystander in all of this. The Black Bloc, though in this case thousands strong, is nothing compared to the 550,000

protesters in Paris, according to CGT union organisers. In many cases, these vast crowds act as a human shield, preventing the police from quickly responding to the Black Bloc to make arrests.

In all this, what prevailed was an apparent groupthink amongst the crowds. When police retreated from a charge or attempted to advance to a forward position, the crowd charged forward as one with a barrage of stones flying overhead. Small groups took up specific tasks, but it was the vast masses with whom the cops' battles were fought, as if a great river was constantly surging against them, struggling to break free from its confinements. The destruction wrought was prodigal. No symbol of the Establishment was spared along the route (though smaller businesses were spared), and the streets looked as if a tornado of posters and stickers had run through them.

### Implications

The main message I have taken from this resistance in Paris is the importance of an ingrained impulse among anarchists in a riot situation. By this, I refer to the fundamental rules of the Black Bloc, without which they could not function. Each person knows to go to the front of the protest, how to prepare for the weapons that shall be unleashed upon them, and how to react as the police charge and retreat. Without this, other more focused organisations, such as paramedics and groups targeting particular buildings, could not function. Simply put, knowledge wrought by experience is required to provide the basis for the following creative destruction.

In this, those of us in places with a less radical population can take heart. In our struggle, in our experience, we are creating the seeds of popular revolt in the future. In protest, as in all else, we must secure the building blocks from which more complex organisation can be launched, even if all that means for now is putting on some black and walking to the front.

~ Fonten



## QUESTIONS ...

How can we agitate, radicalise, activate and weaponise the increasing anger of those woken from slumber by the acrid smoke of a burning planet?

How can we spread and intensify moments of rupture in the social order that allow us to break free and create liberated spaces? How can these weaken the forces that oppose us, not just momentarily, but enduring wounds to systems of domination that can be exploited to magnify and multiply our movements?

How do we support the suspicious minds, those who know something is not quite right, revealing the hidden-in-plain-sight conspiracy of capitalism behind the alienation and dysfunction of our nonsensical society? How do we captivate their attention instead of dismissing their misdirection?

How can we forge connections with other struggles here and around the world so we can learn together and nourish each other? How do we spread our branches while deepening our roots?

How do we weave the social warp with the ecological weft, one binding and reinforcing the other instead of pulling apart? How do we learn to reconnect with nature, seeing ourselves as vital components of our ecosystems?

How do we move from shallow climate populism to radical ecological anarchism? How do we build mass movements without sacrificing our ideals, finding the quantity needed to be effective without losing the essential quality of being radically effective? How do we set our sights higher while keeping view of the beautiful idea ever on the horizon?

How do we shift the strategic terrain from civil disobedience to ecological resistance, from accountable to anonymous, from public disruption to property destruction?

How do we do all of this in the shadow of increasingly powerful authoritarian states and corporations with rapidly advancing technologies of surveillance and social control?

Once the cradle of capitalism, the historic heart of empire, the nursery of neoliberalism, how do we transform the belly of the beast into the hotbed of insurrection and sedition? How do we foment green anarchy in the UK?

~ Some EFlers

# WHY DO PEOPLE KEEP GET

*Police stations, courts, and jail can be stressful, all that aggro and it begs the question: Why bother? Why get arrested in the first place?*

One group that seems to be taking this question seriously is Palestine Action. They have been quietly kicking the shit out of Israel's largest private arms company for over three years. One Elbit factory was forced to close last year, so were its head offices in London. Other sites are bound to fall. It has all come at a price, however. It is no secret that although activists still flock to join the Siege of Leicester, over 100 defendants are facing crown court. Many of them for actions which cost hundreds of thousands of pounds worth of damage. Some are in the millions. They have had numerous acquittals, but it seems likely that some at least will face an all-expenses paid get-away, courtesy of His Majesty. The longest sentence so far is 27 months for £1.2 million worth of damage to the Teleydene plant in Wales, a Canadian owned factory linked to Elbit and atrocities in Palestine.

Activists networked in Palestine Action have responded to this in two ways: The first was publicly announcing that they would lay an indefinite siege to the Elbit UAV factory in Leicester. The siege started on May 1st with hundreds of activists descending on the innocuous Meridian Business Park. It was a bank holiday, but that doesn't matter. They were there to stay, and it's been going solid ever since.



Pics: Guy Smallman

Known for their direct action, this sideways step into protest camps and road blocking was deemed necessary by the group, who badly needed to engage a wider cohort to grow the movement. A similar mix of protest and direct action had delivered the goods at the now dead Oldham factory, sold at a massive loss last year after production was made impossible by the constant attacks. They dabbled with a semi-permanent camp in Shenstone but, following several arrests and OTT security thugs, were eventually moved out of the nearby woods, although a regular presence is still held at the entrance, the factory is still attacked, and production of killer Hermes drones is disrupted. The difficulty of Shenstone is the location: isolated, small, and with limited local support. The beauty of Leicester is the masses of backup they can rely on. Two hundred came out to support a five-day occupation of the roof in 2021, where bottles of water were thrown up over the heads of dozy police to thirsty activists. They have perhaps wisely not chased headlines or bothered with political arguments, instead opting in Leicester to engage with the city on its own terms, respectful of it and not preaching to it. They have also tried to execute awareness raising stunts: crashing an arms dinner at The Grosvenor, spray painting the Foreign Office and squirting a statue of Arthur Balfour with ketchup inside the Houses of Parliament. One of the activists who did Balfour still has bail conditions requiring her never to carry condiments in public.

Some, on the other hand, tired of court cases and legal faff, are now opting for more covert actions. One thing that can be said for them is that they have a pattern of changing tack quickly, responding to an ever-changing political and legal landscape. Many actions are planned as immediate responses to attacks carried out by Israel in Gaza and The West Bank, as well as a response to crackdowns on the group at home. If recent video posts are anything to go by, their shift to more covert actions has begun. The recent 'Doncaster Destroyers' double hit on two targets in one day, being a case in point. They have always done coverts quietly,



but it looks like these kinds of tactics will now dominate. The estate agents, Jones Lang LaSalle, renting Elbit their HQ in the foolishly easy to target Kingsway offices opposite Holborn Tube, were hit by surprise actions countless times. Teams would pull up with paint-filled fire extinguishers and pick axes, spraying and smashing doors and windows, clearing off before the cops had even been called. It's assumed this was part of the pressure that eventually sent Elbit packing out of Kingsway, as well as the direct attacks at Kingsway itself. The Google Maps image of the JLL offices in Mayfair still shows the otherwise posh façade drenched in red paint. JLL, one of the world's largest landlords, have since cut all ties with the arms dealer. Ditto landlords Fisher German who leases the Shenstone building. They were forced to permanently close their Birmingham offices after relentless covert actions by the group. The mood seems to be moving much more to this 'getting away with it' approach. Activists remain free and anonymous, and targeted sites close; it's a win-win. It's not always as simple, as some know to their cost, but for now, who can blame them? Sewage pipes at the Leicester factory were blocked with concrete in August, echoing the tactics used by Israeli settlers who poured tons of



# TING ARRESTED?



concrete down a life-supporting well near a Palestinian village days before.

We will probably see a lot more activity of this kind in the coming months, as well as doubling down on the Siege of Leicester before winter comes. The main concern now, though, is prison support and prison resistance. Many will be taking their protests inside with them and are well prepared, but some may not be so ready. A lot are young, queer and new to activism. Many are Muslim working class; some are in low paid jobs and caught in legal aid no-mans-land. They are not eligible for legal aid and can't afford twenty grand for a barrister. Notable lawyers have offered services pro bono, and small amounts of change have been scraped together, but it's not enough. Donors pour money into climate activism, where activists end up on generous salaries but not to a group who wield sledgehammers. Not all have supportive parents, white privilege, or belong to an activist coterie where getting sent down increases your cultural bank balance. Palestine actionists have been

arrested at court seconds after one trial has finished, only to be thrown into a police cell on a different charge for something else, trapped in a stressful cycle of tiresome hearings. Being held on remand for days or weeks, once shocking, is now not unusual.

When actions began on Elbit during lockdown, the country was a different place. Many weren't even charged, those that were pled not guilty and many were found not guilty, invoking necessity and other human rights defences. Since then, the Israeli Minister of Defence, Benny Gantz, has met with (the then) Foreign Secretary, Dominic Raab, to discuss the problem of Palestine Action. Clearly worried, the minister reminded the British government: "Last weekend, the offices of an Israeli security company were vandalised for the fourth time in a month. We want Israeli companies to continue doing business in London. It's good for both countries." Around the same time, we saw more punitive sentencing in general, first with XR Jumbo jet gluer-oner James Brown (in 2021), then the court of appeal

ruling on the Colston Four (2022), and more recently, the brutal Dartford Bridge sentencing. We've had the PCSC bill (2022) and the Public Order bill (2023). The terrain is darker, the law murkier, the courts harder. What was the worst-case scenario has become the new normal.

On top of all that, a recent bombshell Freedom of Information request from PA revealed that officials at the Israeli Embassy have been trying to intervene in their court cases. In the highly redacted document from the Attorney General's office, Doug Wilson, the Director General himself, reassures his pals from the apartheid state that the PCSC bill has the powers to "tackle non-violent protests that have a significant disruptive effect" – nice one Big G. You are the law, but whatever "tackle" might mean, it does not mean stop and everyone knows it.

For now, at least, the battle will partly take place in court, where judges can rest their wigs, heavy with sweat, on the scales of justice, but also where juries have the potential to fuck up the plans of all concerned. The next big case and the biggest to date, the Elbit Eight trial, will have a London jury. Knowledge about Israel/Palestine is high. Events in The West Bank have cut through the news cycle with some better reporting. Anything could happen. One founder member is charged with blackmail, high-level criminal damage, burglary and assault. They have had many victories; another would be nice, but despite the importance of exposing Elbit in court, the real fight is still in the anonymous industrial estates dotted around the Midlands where Elbit hide.

As long as the British state allows Elbit to arm the occupation, ordinary people in Britain will swell the ranks of Palestine Action – and so they should. Elbit could eventually fold, and the great wish is that an event like that would set off a chain reaction against their franchiste worldwide. Benny Gantz, the Israeli MoD, may say that Elbit doing business here is good for both countries, but Palestine Action also have business, and theirs is the business of mayhem, bringing unprecedented chaos to weapons companies arming Israeli apartheid.

~ Viktoria Spůkna

To find out more: [palestineaction.org](https://palestineaction.org)





# KURDISH SOLIDARITY

## TERROR LAWS USED TO SILENCE DISSENT

In January 2019, I travelled to Syria to learn about the revolution unfolding in the country's north since 2012. At the time, we called it the Rojava Revolution, as the land being held by revolutionary forces was roughly the area that would have comprised western Kurdistan, or Rojava – a strip of land approximately 30 kilometres deep along the northernmost part of the Syrian nation state. Today, we call it the revolution of North and Eastern Syria because it encompasses land outside the Kurdish majority regions in the north and many more ethnicities than Kurds. The revolution is built on three main pillars, which are worked towards in all areas where the Kurdistan Freedom Movement is present (including outside of Kurdistan in diaspora and international organising): grassroots democracy, women's liberation, and ecology.

I could talk much more about the ideology of the Kurdistan Freedom Movement and how it was to live in a real life revolution carried out and administered by the people, but this is sadly not the purpose of this article\*. This article is about the dark and insidious things that have been happening since I returned from Rojava, illustrating the so-called UK's escalating slide into fascism.

Before I start, a few notes: first, I want to recognise that this story is not the worst thing that could have happened to me on returning to England. Other folks have had their houses raided, been imprisoned, and seen what I would categorise as the sharp end of "justice" in this country. Second, as a white person and a citizen of the so-called UK, I have spent a lifetime prior to this being incredibly passport-privileged and floating across some of the world's most dangerous and deadly borders. Even so, I wanted to write this article to tell a story about a specific type of repression that seems to be becoming more prevalent in the current political climate and is likely to affect many readers of this publication if we continue along the current political trajectory.

At the time of writing, it is not illegal to travel to North and Eastern Syria. A law that came into force in 2019 allows the

UK government to designate certain areas of the world as no-go areas for British citizens. Citizens found in these areas can be prosecuted upon their return to the UK, but Westminster has not designated North and Eastern Syria as one of these areas (yet). Fighting with a foreign militia such as the YPG or YPJ (People's Defence Forces in North and Eastern Syria) is illegal under UK law but has proved difficult to prosecute since the government has been working with the YPG and YPJ in the coalition against Islamic State (Isis) since the middle of the last decade. All this to say that even though people travelling to North and Eastern Syria are very likely to hold left-leaning, anarchist or socialist ideas, it has been challenging for the UK government to prevent them from travelling to be part of the revolution there.

For the state, this is a problem. At a time when laws like the Police Crime, Courts and Sentencing Act ('the bill' of Kill the Bill fame) are radically restricting the right to dissent and protest, it is not ideal that people can

come back from North and Eastern Syria spreading ideas about radical grassroots democracy based on values antithetical to those modelled in the current system.

For the government, the question is how to create an extra-legal deterrent to prevent people from travelling to North and Eastern Syria or becoming involved with the Kurdistan Freedom Movement. The answer to this question comes in the form of a part of the 2001 Terrorism Act called Schedule 7.

For those who are unfamiliar with Schedule 7, it allows "ports officers" (in practice, this means border police, customs officers and counter-terror cops):

'to stop and question and, when necessary, detain and search, individuals travelling through ports, airports, international rail stations or the border area to determine whether that person appears to be someone who is or has been concerned in the commission, preparation or instigation of acts of terrorism'.



# CRACKDOWN

Seems fair, right? The police can stop scary people from entering the UK and carrying out acts of terror? No one wants something like 9/11 to happen here, and the police are just doing their jobs, preventing that from happening?

As with many, some might say all police powers, the cops have a habit of overreaching. They also have a long history of racism and classism that mimics the state they represent.

So, how is Schedule 7 really applied? The first thing to point out is that when you are detained under Schedule 7, you do not have the same 'rights' as when arrested. As you are 'detained', you have no right to silence – you are required to comply with the police investigation and answer the questions you are asked – otherwise, you will be arrested. You are required to hand over all electronic devices (and their passcodes), or you will be arrested. You are required (in most cases) to give your biometric data and fingerprints, or you will be arrested. The police can only detain you for a short time (six hours max), so there is no time to wait for your lawyer to arrive.

That is the practice. To whom Schedule 7 is applied is also somewhat predictable if you know anything about the so-called UK. The term "terrorism" is, in this case, deliberately opaque. Terrorism is a word that has become part of our everyday vernacular since "the war on terror" began in the early 2000s; however, defining what counts as terrorism is something most states involved in "the war on terror" have not managed in a concise way. Instead, who is, or is not, a terrorist often comes down to the colour of your skin, your religious beliefs, who is being portrayed as the current villain in UK media ... you get the jist. Like police stop and search powers, Schedule 7 is disproportionately used to detain black and brown people, especially if those people happen to be Muslim. It has been used less frequently to target people who ideologically oppose the government. In practice, this means that people on the radical left with anarchist, socialist or communist views are more at risk of being stopped under Schedule 7.

Recently, there has been a spike in the number of people associated with the Kurdistan Freedom Movement who have been stopped and questioned at the border using Schedule 7 powers. Many of these are Kurdish community members who are stopped simply for being Kurdish and trying to travel. Some of these people are internationalists who have spent time in Kurdish regions and have been inspired by the Kurdish movement.

I have been stopped under this law every time I have tried to leave the UK since returning from North and Eastern Syria. I have also had Prevent officers round to my house and routinely have my car pulled over for whatever nonsense reason the police can think of that day. The last time I went on holiday, I was asked whether I would like to become an informant for MI5. I could speculate for days about why the UK government is so concerned about my daily life and other people inspired by the Kurdistan Freedom Movement. My theories include the UK's closeness to the fascist Turkish state after Brexit, the current expansion of NATO and the Turkish state's veto of new countries joining unless specific conditions around the repression

of the Kurdistan Freedom Movement are met, Turkey's role as the "border police" for the whole of Europe...the list goes on. Still, perhaps the more human question is, what does this mean for those of us who experience repression?

For me, it made me feel wobbly. I hate talking to the police; it makes me feel like a snitch. I have been frightened of ending up in jail if I continue to be politically active, and I have worried that my participation in groups and organising will harm my comrades more than it helps them. Additionally, it is pretty uncomfortable to suspect that you are being watched. A lot.

I have struggled with my mental health for weeks after these stops, especially the cumulative effect of being stopped many times. Despite this, I have stayed involved in organising. This is thanks, in large part, to my comrades. Folks who have dealt with panicked phone calls after stops helped me secure my computer and phone and supported me when my mental health tanked due to repression.

The UK state has refined the tactic of divide and conquer to perfection and has many ways to make people feel isolated. Schedule 7 is one of those methods, and it is carried out within lines of oppression that already exist in our society. Building comradeship is a radical act, in North and Eastern Syria, it is the cornerstone of the revolution, and it needs to be the cornerstone of our movements everywhere. When we talk about how to defend our movements, the first line of self-defence has to be each other.

\*If you want to learn more about the movement, check out @kurdistanolnet on social media. Kurdistan Solidarity Network has heaps of resources and can point you toward whatever part of the Kurdistan Freedom Movement you are most interested in.

~ Arîn Qereçox





# A letter to my centrist aunt

I want to explain my anger in our recent debates. It comes from the futility of explaining our political reality in any way that you will accept. I'm sorry if it seems moralistic, but it's a deeply moral issue, not an intellectual exercise in finding out whose ideology can be more consistent. You might think that you don't have an ideology and, therefore, perceive my anger as a result of your inability to adopt one. But this is an illusion. Everyone makes unconscious value judgments about how things should be, and as a leftist, my goal is to try and make these value judgements apparent to me and others and maybe even change them.

Progressives attempt to adapt ideology in opposition to oppressive systems. Conservatives, despite their best efforts, reveal their ideology upon encountering reality. This is why they need the media: to obscure the disaster of their ideas. The exception to this was Liz Truss, whose stupidity was hard to ignore because it impacted those the media and ruling class cared about: middle and upper-class property owners. People like you.

I understand the temptation to retreat from the battleground and pretend you don't have an ideology. But everybody has an ideology. Centrists pretend their politics are based on "pragmatism" and "reaching across the aisle". As Starmer has often said in response to questions of nationalisation, "I'm pragmatic, not ideological". That might sound appealing; after all, he's saying that he wants to do what makes sense. But this is a smoke screen. What would make sense would be to nationalise utilities and infrastructure. But the most he'll propose is a state-owned energy company in opposition to, and in competition with, existing private companies. This is an ideology of not going too far in one direction or another. The problem is that political intervention



*Pic: Evelyn Simak/CC*

doesn't exist in a vacuum. We already live in a world dominated by marketisation. Inequality has its thumb on the scale. A centrist in power is not wading into neutral territory where their decisions are the only influence. So, when their ideology ensures that they do nothing of significance, the best result is a slightly slower decline in living standards. Eventually, it looks the same as if a conservative had gotten in. And public disillusionment leads to the rise of actual conservatives, who repeat the process slightly quicker, ensuring that their media monopoly allows them to stay in power for at least as long as the centrists did. And so, the cycle continues. Why are the Labour Party going to win in the next election? Because it's their turn. They've signalled that they're not going to change things at all, and the Establishment is content to let them have a go. Is that the best we can do? A different colour rosette? And I know your response: "But we need to win." Firstly, I'd ask you to define who is included in "we."

Because if the last seven years have made anything clear, it's that parliamentarianism considers people like me as anathema. Secondly, if "winning" cannot offer more than a slight swing away from totalising disaster, it's useless.

The rich own everything. They own the houses and the real estate, the land the real estate is built on, the companies who build on the land, who fuel the vehicles, that extract the fuel, the think-tanks which dismiss the impact of the fuel, the newspapers who advertise the think-tanks findings, and the supermarkets which sell the newspapers. They own the TV and radio stations, the banks, the debt, the railways, the water, the energy, the pharmaceutical companies, and the arms companies. There is no part of life uncontaminated by the power held by a couple of hundred men. And they are almost all men, or at the very least, women with white skin.

And I can hear it now. "The passion of youth!" And perhaps my youth should be taken into consideration. The majority of my friends will never own property. And those who inherit wealth will find it no protection against the destroyed world they inherit along with it. Through their system of extraction, the ruling-class will leave us a world resembling the apocalypses of folklore and religion. The answer to this is not pragmatism. The only solution is for a critical mass of people to become ungovernable. And for that, we need the numbers. And for us to get the numbers, we need people in positions of social power — people like you — to see and speak the truth. And the comfort taken in not doing so is not worthy of respect, or fair play, or polite conversation. We're in serious trouble, and we need the numbers. So, I'm not sorry for getting angry. You should be sorry for staying so calm.





# Dear property guardians ...

We get it. You're looking for cheap rent in an expensive world. A way to keep a roof over your head while having time and money to pursue your goals and desires. And hey, maybe you get to live in some quirky buildings and situations!

This is a letter to you all. To explain why we disagree with Property Guardianship and to propose something else.

Property Guardianship came about as an idea in the Netherlands in the '90s. A company called Camelot started advertising their services as anti-squatter security services, using people living in buildings as protection from people ... living in buildings.

Essentially, Camelot and the other companies that subsequently sprung up found a way to make an absolute killing out of a grey area of law. They charged owners for security and charged the guardians again for the privilege of living in a building with none of the rights afforded to renters. People were subject to moves with only 24 hours' notice and given none of the freedom or privacy that the fee they paid should have entitled them to.

Things have moved on a little in 30 years, but while some things have changed, others remain the same. While your guardian contract now might offer a four-week notice period, this is still half the eight-week mandatory period for someone with a rental agreement, or lease. Non-exclusive use of the space means intrusion by the company or property owners without due notice, and you've probably had to sneak guests in because it goes against the terms of your agreement. And, of course, the rules usually require you to say if you intend to be away for more than a few days because, let's face it, their only interest is the security of the building and their income.

Another firm, Dotdotdot, even requires people to "volunteer" 16 hours of community service a month to access their properties to appear "ethical" off the back of free labour!

But more than this, more than some of the issues you face day-to-day as a guardian, Property Guardianship is a political issue.

Realising how easy it is to circumvent housing regulations, some properties are now being renovated to the minimum level



that allows them to place guardians instead of bringing them up to a decent standard.

Consent for this type of housing denies some of the most precariously housed people in society the basic conditions they should be entitled to for what they pay. It allows Property Guardian companies to ignore health and safety regulations and profit from people's lack of alternative options. It is a false answer to the housing crisis.

Tellingly, Camelot started to shut down in 2017 when a court decided that a guardian should be considered to have a tenancy. Rather than risk this happening across all their services, the firm was liquidated in 2019.

Courts suggested YOU should be entitled to the same rights as a tenant, and the company shut down in opposition to that. What does that tell you about how these companies think of you?

As anarchists, we're not here to argue for more regulation, but while the government violently protects private property, it's not like we can just take back these buildings...

A proposal to anyone living as a property guardian or who might be thinking about it:



Consider that, like so many things in today's world, what is convenient might be damaging for others, whether that's homeless people left outside because of the security you are paying to provide for the owner of an empty building or the surrendering of renters' rights that is normalised as guardian companies are left unregulated to take advantage of yourself and others in your position.

At the very least, take these bastards to task and don't let them exploit you more than they already are. Some guardians have gone through the courts to fight for their rights, and new cases are brought every year.

And if you want to look further, why not squatting? Take charge of your life, and take a building! Have autonomy over how you live. Explore living without the fear of a "head guardian" snitching on you. Paint the wall because it makes you feel better, for fuck's sake!

So many buildings that would be on the radar for squatting are occupied by guardians. These companies make life more difficult for homeless people so they can line their pockets with middle-man money.

Visit the Advisory Service for Squatters; attend a Practical Squatters Evening; maybe you'll find like-minded people, and it will be the beginning of something beautiful.

And hey, if it's not for you? Perhaps when you're made to leave your guardianship building, you might help the keys find their way into the hands of those who need them.

# WE NEED A PLETHORA OF TACTICS

## METACRISIS VS SOCIAL ECOLOGY



'Metacrisis' is my chosen umbrella term for the escalation of multiple global crises of climate, ecology, and political economy, which have reached such a point now that all radical organising is a form of crisis response. And I know for folk on the sacrificial frontlines of capitalism, the terms 'radical organising' and 'crisis response' belie that they have to fight just to survive. The metacrisis is hidden from many of us a lot of the time. Until it isn't.

Meanwhile, three records have been smashed on climate, as well as the continuing series of natural disasters in 2023 made worse and more likely by the climate crisis. These are average global surface air temperature, global sea temperature and Antarctic ice loss. Ecological and social tipping points are upon us.

Social ecology is an appropriate response to the metacrisis that will lead to widespread societal collapse within our lifetimes, even as some are already living through it or have been sunk by it. Murray Bookchin first developed his theory of social ecology in the 1960s. Its foundation is dialectical naturalism (Dianat), which Bookchin developed from Hegel's dialectics and Marxian dialectical materialism. Dianat is a deceptively simple ecological philosophy that explores how the human domination of other humans leads to us also oppressing non-human nature and how to stop one we need to stop the other.

These times of crisis are fuelling the rise of the far right, who sometimes adopt "ecological" arguments for locking borders against "polluting" refugees and blame the climate crisis on China and Africa, preferring to set up World War III rather than take responsibility for fossil fuel emissions. This is nothing new. We saw it in the blood and soil doctrine of the Nazis in 1930s Germany. So, all organising in the metacrisis must be deeply ecological and explicitly anti-fascist.

Post-Covid, we also need to be explicitly anti-fantastical-conspiracist. As the planet heats even further, so will distracting narratives. As well as being anti-liberatory — we can't organise against enemies who will be forever hidden from us — this

conspiracism is often implicitly anti-Jewish.

A part of social ecology which some anarcho folk take issue with, which is not a dogma so much as Bookchin's preferred program for introducing a stateless social ecological society, is known as libertarian municipalism. This means using existing local power structures to gradually wrest power back from the centre as a gateway to confederated, communitarian self-government. It's unlikely that such a society would materialise just as Bookchin prescribed on any significant scale. However, in times of crisis, all efforts to draw power from the state back towards the local (whether direct democracy or consensus decision-making) are to be welcomed.

It could be using ZAD<sup>1</sup> type tactics, seizing the local means of production, sabotaging local outposts of deathly corporations out of existence, strengthening and extending mutual aid networks and localised food-growing initiatives, or indeed implementing libertarian municipalism. I love Peter Gelderloos' perspective that "the solutions are already here"<sup>2</sup> and the "build and fight" formula suggested by the Black-led Cooperation Jackson project in the US.

Whoever we are with on a given day, how can we instigate conversations about crisis organising, especially with people "not like us" who may seem to be sold on capitalism? Not easy, I know. My main job is teaching English online to students worldwide (for a terrible corporate platform which pays below UK minimum wage), and 95% of the time, any attempt at radical connection with my students is hopeless. However, 5% of the time, something special happens. You may be surprised at what revolutionary ferment is happening in some of the young minds of China, especially among women.

I like to imagine social ecology and other forms of ecological, social anarchism as a hidden potential in every quarter of

human society, a kind of quantum magnet underlying everything that could draw everything else to it. Everyone can give in to that magnet, even if just a little. Aric McBay's *Full Spectrum Resistance* is useful here. I have an idea of "even fuller spectrum resistance", which means leaving no stone or member of society unturned. In a Colin Ward<sup>3</sup>-esque way, what can we observe around us through "anarchism in action and escalation" in times of crisis, and how can we plug into that? Locally, this includes extending a hand to conservative-minded folk whilst being uncompromisingly anti-oppression. Online, this includes utilising resources like *A Radical Guide*. Even AI could be useful for organising without giving in to accelerationism. Algorithmic Justice League, Not My AI and Queer in AI signal how AI could be democratised and liberated from patriarchy, notwithstanding its ecological impact.

In times of crisis, as anarcho types, we could also build bridges with existing activist groups, even if we sometimes find them infuriating. From my own experience, I have to look at what I half-affectionately and half-frustratedly term the XR milieu, which includes Extinction Rebellion, Just Stop Oil and the Deep Adaptation / Transformative Adaptation crowds — the latter is a kind of extra urgent reiteration of the Transition Movement. I got arrested with XR in the early days, but I have taken a critical attitude towards them since then. I don't believe in the disempowering strategic stance of pleading with an illegitimate government to create Citizens' Assemblies, with the assumption that these assemblies would be well-advised and empowered enough to transfer the power of capital back to ecology and the people — what the metacrisis demands. Beyond the XR milieu, from the collapsitarian perspective, Just Collapse are great in that they centre marginalised groups. (I'll be interviewing Just Collapse on my YouTube channel Epic Tomorrows in the coming months).

We need more affinity groups or study and action. Bookchin's idea of an affinity group is not just one that does actions but



# CTICS



one that engages in deep regular study of texts for collective liberation, including a revolutionary understanding of history that is not deterministic or statistical, that gives us plenty of options. Organising in times of crisis could even mean organising our own lives and memories into something more pointed and in a better direction.

On a more personal note, my stepdad runs Ely's folk sing-around at a pub in Somerset. I sing there occasionally and imagine a pub-based social-ecological revolution. Many of the traditional tunes sung are very grounded in ecology and the seasons, with a deep understanding of farming (the old way) —or else they tell of tragic events that have befallen common folk through the ages, where an oppressive class system often features in the background. I reflect that all sorts congregate in pubs. What ground could we find for anti-authoritarian crisis organising, for drawing power back

from the centre? The beauty of pub-based organising could be when we get it wrong; we can put it down to the drink and try again next week. AGs can meet in pubs if everyone is alright with it. Just be careful who's watching or listening.

I don't want to detract from what anyone is doing to fight against all forms of authoritarianism and capitalism and to fight for life and a reasonable standard of living for everyone. Nevertheless, maybe the good fight is best framed as a social-ecological one, where every oppressed human is understood in the context of a damaged local ecology, and every thoughtlessly ripped up plant or killed animal is understood as the result of human hierarchies. This is a conversation that we could continue down the pub. Urgently. Mine's a real ale or cider. Cheers.

~ Matthew Azoulay

1. Zone a Defendre, a form of autonomously-organised land occupation best known for its protection of Notre-Dame-des-Landes from an airport development in the 2010s

2. Also the name of his 2022 book

3. Ward (1924-2010) was an influential anarchist thinker who wrote extensively for Freedom Press on subjects from housing and urban planning to childhood and social policy

## PLACES ...

<b>Aberdeen</b>	
Aberdeen Social Centre	AB1 15B
<b>Bradford</b>	
1 in 12	BD1 2LY
<b>Brighton</b>	
Cowley Club	BN1 4JA
The Query	BN2 1RJ
<b>Bristol</b>	
BASE	BS5 6JY
<b>Cambridge</b>	
The Lock-On	CB1 1HA
<b>Doncaster</b>	
Bentley Urban Farm	HU1 51Y
<b>Durham</b>	
People's Bookshop	DH1 3NP
<b>Edinburgh</b>	
ACE (c/o 525 Ferry Road)	EH5 2FF
<b>Falmouth</b>	
Rubicund	TR11 3DP
<b>Glasgow</b>	
Calton Books	G1 5BX
<b>Hull</b>	
Ground Centre	HU3 1YE
<b>Liverpool</b>	
News From Nowhere	L1 4HY
Casa/Initiative Factory	L1 9BP
<b>Leeds</b>	
Wharf Chambers	LS2 7EQ
<b>London</b>	
May Day Rooms	EC4Y 1DH
London Action Resource Centre	E1 1ES
House of Annetta	E1 6QH
Freedom Press	E1 7QX
Black Cat Cafe	E5 8HB
Well Space	E9 6RG
Housmans Bookshop	N1 9DY
Solidarity Hub	N7 6AA
Wolves Lane Centre	N22 5JD
London LGBTQ+ Centre	SE1 9JH
The Field	SE14 5HD
Feminist Library	SE15 6JL
56a Infoshop	SE17 3LH
<b>Manchester</b>	
Partisan	M5 4DE
<b>Newcastle</b>	
Star and Shadow	NE2 1BB
<b>Nottingham</b>	
Sumac Centre	NG7 6HX
Sparrows' Nest	contact via website
<b>Southampton</b>	
October Books	SO17 2N



# LIFE OF BI

Not all bisexuals are radicals, but it can be a radical identity. Bisexuals operate outside usual understandings of sexuality – we are not one or the other, we are not this or that, we are everything and nothing, one and the other, this and that and a slice of cake. Our attraction is not fixed but fluid. We are not simple or easily definable; we are complex and difficult to understand. Hell, most of us don't even really call ourselves bisexual.

This puts us in a uniquely queer position to challenge what it means to question authority, liberate ourselves from labels, confront patriarchy, dismantle the family and monogamy, and experience radical love.

But just as capitalism sinks its claws into anything radical ready to commodify, bastardise, and simplify it, bisexuality risks falling into the same fate. Liberalism tells us that the more we talk about things, the more content and consumables we have ready to buy the more accepting we must be. Bisexuality has recently become a more significant part of the mainstream in the UK: more books about bisexuality are being written, and mainstream representations of bisexuality are popping up everywhere.

We talk about bisexuality more; there are more things to read, watch and consume; therefore, we must accept bisexuals too. "Look! Bisexuals can come to spend money in this pub too!" "Hey, learn to be bisexual with our easy guide!"

This gives the false impression that first, we can simply spend and consume our way towards liberation – going to see Disney films where they tease a same-sex kiss or reading books where a character stands up for their bi-ness: "Uhm, actually I'm not gay/straight, I'm bisexual". And second, people will understand or "tolerate" (I hate that word) us. The complexities of our sexualities make it almost impossible to see representation that truly reflects us all. We are purposely difficult to define, meaning any attempt to "represent" us feels hollow and forced. Of



*Hidden in history: While Mexican revolutionary figure Emiliano Zapata was publicly homophobic, some of his closest comrades described him as bi, including trysts with the son-in-law of then-President Porfirio Diaz*

course, this doesn't mean there shouldn't be any representation, but this will not be our liberation.

To be bisexual is to be hidden. Unlike the dreamy queer communities that shows like *Heartstopper* try to showcase, bisexuals do not live this reality. There are few obvious bisexual spaces – queer spaces, LGBTQ+ friendly spaces, and even these so-called "safe spaces" suffer from the problems of discriminating against bisexuals. Ever worried about appearing not queer enough? Ever been called just straight/just gay by other queer people for being in a straight/gay-presenting relationship? Ever just called yourself gay to not have to deal with a more complex discussion about your sexuality?

Bisexuality risks being turned into a commodity and losing its radicality. Because we don't have many spaces to convene and discuss and be openly and safely bisexual, we rarely know how cool being bisexual really can be. We must fight for a radical bisexuality, and that doesn't mean necessarily demanding representation in films, TV shows, and books.

Our fight comes in building bisexual communities, in talking about bisexuality with everyone, and in educating other

bisexuals about the awesome power of living outside heteronormativity. Feeling lost in my sexuality, I only realised how many people around me were bi once I began discussing my sexuality and sharing my thoughts. "Why don't people get my sexuality?", "Why do I struggle to pass as bisexual?", "Where do I learn about what it means to be bi?" are all questions I've been able to explore by building bisexual communities.

These communities help us understand ourselves and embrace our complexities. It allows us to fight against the simplification of our sexualities, against the commodification of bi-ness, and turn bisexuality into a crisis.

Liberation is what we make of it. No one else will provide it for us, certainly no multinational corporation. By turning bisexuality into a crisis, we fight against a true definition or representation of bisexuality. By making bisexuality a crisis, we fuck with the simple minds and the simplified structures enforced by patriarchal capitalism. By making bisexuality a crisis, we deny capitalism getting its grubby little hands on us. Bisexuality should be a crisis – that is our power, that is our radicality.

~ Daniel Newton



# REVIEW: ANARCHY'S IDEAS

Debating Anarchism

by Mike Finn

ISBN: 978-1-350118-10-2

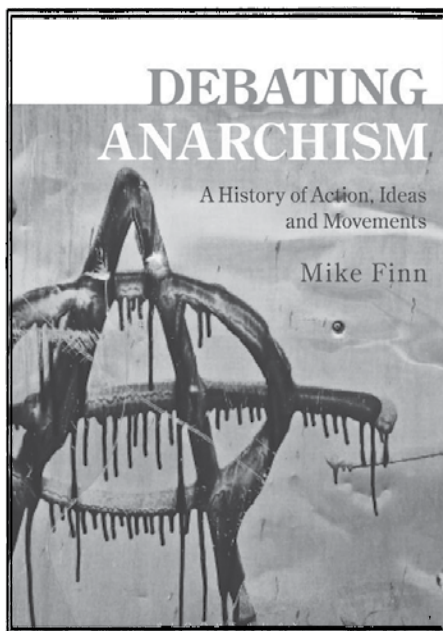
224 pp

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What exactly is it to be an anarchist? As a political philosophy, anarchism can embody ideas about the nature of authority, the state, and capital. It can also describe a way of doing things as individuals and collectives. In the first sense, anarchists are relatively easy to define. Since the 19th century, various political actors have self-described as anarchists, often appending further descriptors (social anarchism, anarchist communism, anarcho-syndicalism, etc.) to clarify their precise version. The second sense is fuzzier. Humans engage in diverse anarchistic practices daily, even without awareness of anarchism as a political ideal.

This often makes the study of anarchism a confusing endeavour. As Mike Finn notes in his introduction to *Debating Anarchism*, 'The problem of anarchist historiography is that anarchism is either everywhere – an immanent, naturally occurring reality that is universal and eternal ... or nowhere – an inconceivable entity erased from the pages of scholarly literature'. Finn's book seeks to resolve this by 'demythologising' anarchism and setting its development within broader historical currents.

Rooted in discussions with students across two courses he taught as a historian at the University of Exeter *Debating Anarchism* is an exceptional effort to pin down precisely what we are looking at when we talk about anarchism and anarchists. Central is putting the development of both into dialogue with other historical currents. In some cases, this involves rereading familiar ground but in new ways. The first chapter thus explores the 19th century socialist gatherings of the First International and is dedicated to the thought of Proudhon, Bakunin, Wilson, Guillaume, Blanc and Kropotkin. Attention is paid to the 1872 split between the anarchists and Marxists, a topic too often presented as a division



over doctrine and consequently a bit dry, and disconnected from events. Finn prefers to trace the life trajectories of the major actors, exploring the contexts that led to Proudhon's mutualism, Bakunin's anarchist socialism, and setting the anarchist faction's antipathy to the state in a wider context. Readers get a sense not just of different intellectual currents but also of the flows of history that connected individuals to the revolutionary upheavals and patterns of repression that marked their lives. We get a vivid sense of the lived experience of revolution and social contexts reflected in the development of 19th Century anarchism. Rather than find anarchists everywhere (and nowhere) or find them as isolated theoreticians of revolution, we see them inserted as living participants in the "age of revolution".

Chapter Two takes a similar approach to the debates around "propaganda of the deed", often abstracted as primarily a split between collectivists and individualists, between those who naively believed that isolated acts of anti-state violence would stir the masses to revolt and those who saw organisation and mass struggle as the answer. Finn dissolves such rigid distinctions, contextualising anarchist

violence within state repression. He then interrogates the different things that turn of the century anarchists understood by anarchist "deeds", including education, trade unionism, mutual aid, and violence.

Chapter Three examines the involvement of anarchists in the Russian and Spanish revolutions. For well-read anarchists, both the Makhnovist Movement and the anarcho-syndicalist CNT will be familiar topics, but Finn's exploration of the histories, contexts, internal debates and multiple anarchisms within both movements still offers plenty to think about. There's a willingness to critique and probe the positions taken by different factions and individuals within these movements, leaving plenty of space to ponder the nature of anarchism.

In Chapter Four, the extra-European aspects of the movement come into view as Finn discusses the development of anarchism in India and Japan. In doing so, Finn looks to resist the temptation to "co-opt" these traditions to one global anarchism, aiming to understand the likes of M.P.T. Acharya and Hatta Shuzo as creating new anarchisms, themselves products of determining historical circumstances.

Finally, Chapter Five examines anarchism "at the end of history", particularly the formation of anarcho-feminism, Black anarchism, alter-globalisation anarchism and green anarchism.

*Debating Anarchism* is a high-quality introductory text for anyone looking to understand anarchism's key ideas, anarchist ways of doing history or anyone who wants to place the emergence of anarchist theories at different points in modern global history. As the product of a university seminar, there's discussion of different scholarly viewpoints that non-academic readers might find distracting. However, this is generally woven in deftly and unobtrusively. Finn has masterfully pulled together the disparate strands of anarchy across two centuries in a sympathetic but still critical way, inclusive of a wide range of ideas, but still purposeful in understanding where exactly we can find anarchism.

~ Jack Saunders





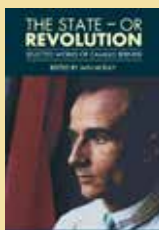
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# ABOUT ANARCHISM

There are many misconceptions about what anarchism is and what anarchists want in the media. Some of the myths are accidental, some spread deliberately — but the most famous is that we're all about chaos.

Little could be further from the truth, the famous circled A for example is historically a symbolic acronym. Anarchy is Order.

While we have our share of chaotic adherents and experiences, and sometimes comrades' methods are very direct, we have no desire to simply break the system. We also want to replace it with something better, known as the beautiful idea.

What that idea represents in its specifics differs from person to person, as with every broad creed (capitalism included), but for the last 150 years, from individualism to mutualism, to anarcho-communism, anarcho-syndicalism and libertarian municipalism, the irony is that we are often obsessed with organisation. Which will happen when you're trying to frame a whole alternative society to the one we have now.

This paper is itself produced by an organised non-hierarchical collective and covers some of the broad range of topics where you will find anarchists fighting for a better future.

Every member has an equal say in how Freedom Press runs, and no-one is unaccountable for their actions.

### Some resources:

[libcom.org](http://libcom.org): Huge repository of history and theory on every aspect of anarchism  
[enoughisenough14.org](http://enoughisenough14.org): News from all over Europe about what anarchists are getting up to  
[channelzeronetwork.com](http://channelzeronetwork.com): Collection of podcasts and anarchist-aligned radio shows from across the globe  
[Activist Court Aid Brigade](http://activistcourtaidbrigade.org): Legal support for when the action goes a bit wrong  
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Dingbats are from 1910 issues of Emma Goldman's *Mother Earth*.  
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We are socialists, disbelievers in property, advocates of the equal claims of all to work for the community as seems good — calling no-one master, and of the equal claim to each to satisfy as seems good to them, their natural needs from the stock of social wealth they have laboured to produce ... we are anarchists, disbelievers in the government of the many by the few in any shape and under any pretext.

*Freedom*, a Journal of Anarchist Socialism, Vol 1, No. 1, October 1886